



liz lapidus public relations

The Royal Gazetteonline

BERMUDA'S MOST TRUSTED SOURCE FOR NEWS & INFORMATION

“Atlanta: An Exciting City Worth Visiting”

By Robyn Skinner

July 6, 2011

<http://www.royalgazette.com/article/20110706/ISLAND06/707069956/-1/Island>



Sitting 720 feet above Atlanta in the Sun Dial Bar above the Westin
Photo by Robyn Skinner

“Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.” Maya Angelou

She sat two benches over playing on her phone. I noticed her immediately; she was by herself.

I could see our train-mate glancing up from her phone as my travel buddy and I struggled with the map.

She spoke: “Where are you going?”

My travel buddy answered: "We're not sure. We think we have to get off the subway at the Civic Center for our hotel."

"Why don't you give me the hotel's number and I will find out where you should go."

My first encounter with an Atlanta native and I knew it was the right choice. It? My choice for July's destination in the Rock Fever column: Atlanta, Georgia.

I'll be the first to admit that I never considered Atlanta as a vacation destination and everyone I spoke to before leaving made comments like: "Uh, go to New York." But, I maintained my position (plus I had bought my ticket so.....)

I completely underestimated this southern city that mixes the friendliness of a small town with the cosmopolitan of New York City and the expanse of Toronto. What I can't understand is why I never took advantage of the city when it is a direct flight away!

Thanks to a Delta flight that gives you half a day of work before you leave, and AirTran which helps lower the prices, getting there is no battle. Even better is the easy subway system that will deliver you directly from the airport into the city in no time for just \$2.50!

Without a doubt the second reason for visiting Atlanta is the generosity of the people. Honestly, how many places have you visited where a stranger on the train offers to call your hotel for you? And where else can you go where the person selling you tickets for an exhibit gives you hints on how to save your money in their city? Or where the servers are so friendly in restaurants they offer to walk you to the pharmacy you need to find? That never happened in New York City (sorry NYC, I love you, but

My reason three? Atlanta can be a destination that you enjoy for 24 hours or you enjoy for five days. The city offers both the high-speed tourist visit (most of the attractions are located in one downtown area) and the expanse of neighbourhoods that create Atlanta and take days to understand. If you really want to extend your stay then there are also the Lanier Islands and the Chattahoochee River where you can canoe, kayak, etc....My stay? It was about four days and I will definitely need to return! Today? We'll try to visit in 24 hours.

Want a reason four for visiting Atlanta? Everything here is the largest, tallest, first and only! Example? The first night there I entered a clear elevator on the outside of the Westin Hotel the tallest hotel in the Western Hemisphere in downtown Atlanta and scaled more than 720 feet to the Sun Dial restaurant/bar above the Westin Hotel on Peach Tree Street. Bonus? The bar (which is casual and serves appetiser-type food) and the restaurant (which is formal) turn, giving you a bird's-eye view of the city. Second bonus? On certain days of the week there is a jazz band serenading your orbit!

When I returned to the ground, the city of Atlanta couldn't have been more helpful in organising my reason five for my trip: a city pass. OK, I had to buy the pass, but this booklet of tickets offered me great discounts to visit the World of Coca-Cola (Atlanta is where Coca-Cola started) and the zoo among other attractions in this tree-lined city. The city pass will also help focus your visit.

My reason six is Pemberton Place. OK, it's the tourist centre, but there's a reason for that.....uh it's on the to-do list! If you start here then you can visit the World of Coca-Cola (the world's best brainwash) and the largest aquarium in the world! Yes, they have not one, but FOUR whale sharks, rays, zebra sharks, turtles and more fish than you can.....well you get it, in 6.3 million gallons of water in a tank that ranges in depth from 20

to 33. And that's just one tank! Don't worry there's a great cafeteria here so take your time and make sure you get a coffee before you get to the touch pool with more sharks and rays! I swear, amazing...even if you're not an animal lover. Of course if you are an animal lover, then you have to make it to Zoo Atlanta (which is slightly outside of downtown)! They have pandas and a gorilla exhibit that is so big you actually feel like you might have been transported to Rwanda!

My seventh stop would be, of course, the CNN headquarters. Yes, they are based in Atlanta thanks to the owner, Ted Turner who moved to Savannah, Georgia when he was nine. Yes, I know I'm a journalist, but even if you are not you will enjoy the tour of this theme park turned news centre. Imagine being able to peep into how they bring you the news every day? It's overwhelming to watch.

Mr Turner is also responsible for number eight on my list. I'm not even a baseball fan but the Atlanta Braves definitely have their following! So once you've finished wandering around CNN you should catch a game at Turner Field. To get there take a free shuttle from Atlantic Underground, which is about a ten-minute walk from CNN.

Here I will have to interject with one NOT to do in Atlanta: Do not visit the Atlantic Underground. The guides exclaimed: "the best nightlife", "great shops" and on and on. Well, I tried it at night and I tried it during the day and I would say.....SKIP IT. There was no nightlife to speak of and the shops were.....well if you want to shop in Atlanta you can find a better place.

Then again, if you do have some time left in your day and want some shopping then head back North and visit my reason nine, Atlantic Station. It has hundreds of stores, great restaurants and even cinemas! Even better it's in Midtown so it won't take much to get there. My suggestion? Stop for dinner at Rosa Mexicano! Organic and seasonal foods fill flax-seed tortillas that are washed away by margaritas worth the \$8 or so they charge. Want more shopping? Well I didn't visit, but I was told Lenox Square and Phipps Plaza, but these were further away so we missed them (again....five days...I'm telling you).

Finally, my last hurrah on 24 hours (OK so it's creeping up to 36 now so you see why you need more time) is to head to Shout Restaurant in Midtown (www.h2sr.com/) just in case you need a bite and then head upstairs where they have a deck that looks out on the city and a great mix of reggae and hip hop through the night! Oh and are you bored there? Well have no fear head to Crescent Avenue which is just five minutes away by foot, and you will find outdoor bars and cheesy nightclubs for you to dance until the wee hours. Then it's time tobook a longer trip to Atlanta.

Honestly, it's hard to keep this column less than a page! I have left out some of the best bits too. Of course Atlanta is the home to historic figures such as Martin Luther King Jr and you can visit his home and the historic Ebenezer Church on Auburn Avenue. No comparison, but the home of Pulitzer Prize-winner Margaret Mitchell (author of 'Gone with the Wind'), is also in Atlanta! Then you have to visit the Fox Theater, which is a former Shriner's mosque and seats 5,000 people in its auditorium that reminded me of the castles of India! And then you have to eat in the Turkish restaurant, Truva, downtown before heading to karaoke next door...and then..

See I told you...I could go on, but I can't. I must stop somewhere. So VISIT ATLANTA and my blog www.robynswanderings.com for more photos!

Until next week when we meet again to discuss...flights. Adios.